

Case 3240***Vespertilio nanus* Peters, 1852 (currently *Pipistrellus nanus*; Mammalia, Chiroptera): proposed conservation of the specific name**

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Abstract. The purpose of this application, under Article 23.9.3 of the Code, is to conserve the widely used name *Vespertilio nanus* Peters, 1852 (currently *Pipistrellus nanus*) for the African Banana bat (family VESPERTILIONIDAE). The name is threatened by limited use of a senior subjective synonym *P. africanus* (Rüppell, 1842).

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Chiroptera; VESPERTILIONIDAE; *Pipistrellus nanus*; Banana bat; Africa.

1. Two bat (family VESPERTILIONIDAE) specimens collected from Shoa Province, Ethiopia, and lodged in the Museum of Frankfurt am Main (= S.M.F.), were catalogued with the registration numbers II.N.9*.a,b and were formally named as *Vespertilio pipistrellus* varietas *africanus* by Rüppell (1842, p. 156). Subsequently, Mertens (1925, p. 22) designated II.N.9*.a (now catalogued as S.M.F. 4306) as the lectotype of *V. pipistrellus africanus* (skin with skull not extracted) and classified it in a new synonymy as *Pipistrellus kuhlii africanus*. See Kock (2001) for an account of Rüppell's (1842) other specimen (II.N.9*.b).

2. Koopman (1975, pp. 399–400) examined the lectotype of *P. africanus* (by then its skull had been extracted), and stated that it represented a specimen of *Pipistrellus nanus* (Peters, 1852), and that the name *P. africanus* (Rüppell, 1842) was a senior synonym of *P. nanus* (Peters, 1852). The specific name of *P. nanus* was originally published in the binomen *Vespertilio nanus* Peters, 1852 (p. 63, pl. 16, fig. 2).

3. Kock (2001) examined and measured the lectotype and concluded that its characters and dimensions left no doubt that *V. pipistrellus africanus* represented the same taxon that is currently known as *P. nanus*.

4. Kock (2001) listed nine publications in which the senior name, *Pipistrellus africanus*, was adopted in place of *Pipistrellus nanus* (e.g. Ansell & Dowsett (1988, p. 41); Dowsett et al. (1991, p. 258) and Dumont et al. (1999, p. 160)). However, even though Koopman (1975, p. 399; see para. 2 above) identified the seniority of the name *P. africanus*, the name *Pipistrellus nanus* has continued to be widely used, occurring in at least 12 books on the mammals of Africa (e.g. Ansell (1978, p. 24); Delany & Happold (1979, pp. 91, 114, 134); Taylor (2000, pp. 105–107)). The name *P. nanus* was also used in Corbet & Hill (1986, p. 78); Koopman (1993, p. 222) and Nowak (1999, p. 427). These are three widely consulted books on the mammals of the world. It was also used in Hutson et al. (2001, pp. 30, 78), which is the I.U.C.N. Global Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan for Microchiropteran bats.

5. In addition, the name *P. nanus* has been used in at least 13 papers published after 1975 on the taxonomy and/or distributions of Chiroptera in various African countries or regions (e.g. Crawford-Cabral (1986, p. 17); Happold et al. (1987, p. 372) and Van Cakenberghe et al. (1999, pp. 305–306); this list is far from complete). The number of papers focused on reproduction, echolocation, diet and other non-taxonomic and non-distributional subjects, and referring to *P. nanus*, has not been assessed, but these papers are numerous.

6. Furthermore, there have been at least eight publications after 1975 focused on the biology or systematics of this species, with *Pipistrellus nanus* in their titles (e.g. Laval & Laval, 1977; Von Schliemann & Schlosser, 1978; Happold & Happold, 1990, 1996 and Bernard et al., 1997). Few (if any) other African microbats have received as much attention to their general biology as this species and, because they are frequently encountered in the furled leaves of banana plants, few species are so well known in Africa.

7. I am aware of at least four publications in which it has been suggested or implied that the name *P. nanus* should be conserved in the interests of nomenclatural stability. These are Largen et al. (1974, pp. 243–244); Ansell (1978, p. 24); Meester et al. (1986, pp. 53–54) and Grubb et al. (1998, p. 85).

8. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary power to suppress the specific name *africanus* Rüppell, 1842, as published in the trinomen *Vespertilio pipistrellus africanus*, for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *nanus* Peters, 1852, as published in the binomen *Vespertilio nanus*;
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *africanus* Rüppell, 1842, as published in the trinomen *Vespertilio pipistrellus africanus* and as suppressed in (1) above.

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Comments on this case are invited for publication (subject to editing) in the *Bulletin*: they should be sent to the Executive Secretary, I.C.Z.N., c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: iczn@nhm.ac.uk).